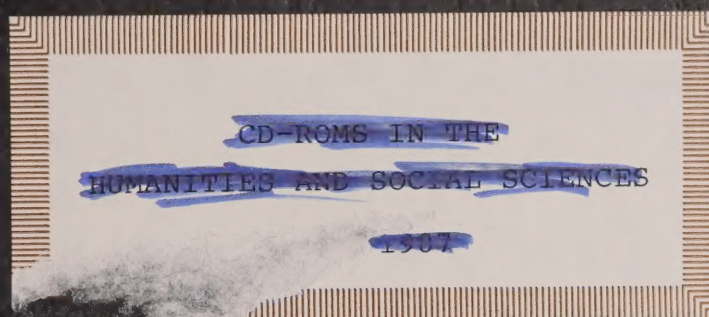




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## Employment Information Series

INNOVATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

A CASE STUDY IN JOB ENRICHMENT  
MIRACLE FOOD MART  
(SUBSIDIARY OF STEINBERG'S LIMITED)  
PERSONNEL SERVICES

Number 14



Ministry of  
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## INNOVATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

### A CASE STUDY IN JOB ENRICHMENT MIRACLE FOOD MART (SUBSIDIARY OF STEINBERG'S LIMITED) PERSONNEL SERVICES

Number 14

by

Ian S. G. Meadows

Research Branch

Ontario Ministry of Labour

June 1975

Hon. John P. MacBeth  
Minister

R. D. Johnston  
Deputy Minister





## INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a radical change in the organization of a small office group. The re-arrangement was quite fundamental and, as a result of it, the group has become more effective and all individual jobs have been considerably enriched. Specifically, the management finds that the output of the group has increased both in volume and in the range of its activities, and the employees find that their jobs are more enjoyable, more challenging and better paid. It is interesting to note that the term "job enrichment" was never used in carrying out this change in work arrangements. Yet, it clearly embodies the principles of that approach, and so clearly demonstrates its good effect, that it can, unquestionably, be considered as a practical example of successful job enrichment.

The Personnel Services group at the Toronto office of Miracle Food Mart (subsidiary of Steinberg's Limited) presently consists of eight employees, one of whom is the Manager. The group is engaged in work of a mainly clerical nature, including the keeping of records and the giving of information. Prior to 1971, there were six clerks each of whom specialized in a different area of the group's work, and dealt with all enquiries and records, exclusively in that area. In 1971 they changed this way of operating.

This case study describes the setting in which the change took place, the reasons why the change was undertaken, the way in which it was carried out, and the situation as it is today.

The case writers visited the Personnel Records offices in July 1974 and January 1975 to observe the work arrangements and to talk with the members of the group. These people, including the clerks who have joined the group since the change was begun, have contributed a wealth of information about the group and the way it operates. In reporting the history of the change, we have drawn mainly on the recollections of the Personnel Services Manager and two clerks who have been with the group since before the change. Those clerks who have joined since the change were able to contribute to the description of the current situation. Observations and comments of the General Manager and of Store Managers who use the group's service have also been included.

The report is presented in four main sections. The first section describes the nature of the group and the kind of



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work it does, and explains why the change was undertaken in the first place. The second section describes how the group went about making the change, how the re-training and re-organizing was done, and how the group has expanded its role in the Company. The third section describes the situation as it is today, three years after the new work arrangements were introduced. In the Fourth section, the new work arrangements are evaluated in terms of four dimensions of job enrichment: Variety; Autonomy; Task Identity and Feedback.

The group emerges as a going concern, greatly improved in both morale and effectiveness. This is reflected in the attitudes of the group's members, and in their performance as confirmed by Management and the Store Managers they serve. Substantial job enrichment is noted, on all four dimensions, and for all members of the group.

We are very grateful to the Management of Miracle Food Mart (subsidiary of Steinberg's Limited) for allowing us to study this case, and to all the members of the Company who kindly took the time to discuss it with us. In particular, we would like to thank Mrs. Reese, Manager of Personnel Services, and the members of her group: Isa Penman, Christine Baldwin, Wendy Innes, Theresa Ruberto, Hazel Sanford, Barbara Trebell and Rose Uprichard. The kindness, courtesy, patience and cooperation which they extended to us on our visits to their offices have been a great help in preparing this case study. The General Manager, Mr. N. Auslander, kindly discussed the case and the report with us; Store Managers, Mr. Bob Chamberlain and Mr. Jack O'Rourke gave us helpful information from the "client" point of view.

#### BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR CHANGE

Steinberg's Limited is based in Montreal, and has operated supermarkets in Ontario for a number of years. In 1971 Steinberg's Limited established Miracle Food Mart as a subsidiary company. The Personnel Services Group with which we are concerned here is located at the Regional Head Office in Rexdale, Ontario. The group's main function is to maintain records of all personnel in the region, and to provide information to the stores on request. The Managers, bookkeepers and supervisors who use this service will be referred to in this case, for the sake of brevity, as the group's "clients". The group is not involved, directly, in the hiring or training of employees.

The group's work is partly clerical, in the recording, filing and retrieval of information; and partly personal contact, in the answering of enquiries from a large number of clients. The group consists normally of six or seven female clerical employees and a Manager. The employees do not belong to a union.

Personnel matters concerning approximately 5,000 employees in the Ontario Region are dealt with by the group. The actual work can be classified under two main types:

- i) the compiling of information files on newly-hired employees, and updating the files when employees are transferred, terminated or undergo change of status, salary or conditions.
- ii) the providing of information (from the above files) to store management, employees, payroll department and external agencies, such as medical insurance, life insurance, trade unions, etc.

The work involved in compiling information can be illustrated by the case of a new employee being hired. When a new employee is hired, all the data needed for him to receive his pay, subject to the appropriate deductions for tax, pension, insurance, etc. are entered by the Personnel Services clerks into a computer file and a regular office file. Other data necessary for the new employee to have access to appropriate fringe benefits are entered; these benefits include vacation pay, sick pay, bereavement pay, leave of absence, long-term disability pay, and so on. The computer files for all employees are printed out weekly by the Computer Centre; the printouts go to the Personnel Services department, where each clerk takes out her section, checks the data and uses the file as a day-to-day source of information. The office document-file is also kept up-to-date and is used as a back-up source.

When an employee undergoes some change of organizational status, such as transfer or termination, or of personal status, such as marriage or number of dependents, the files must be altered. If a salary or wage increase is awarded, changes may be needed in insurance, tax and other items. When an employee is terminated for any reason, the file has to be rendered inactive and, eventually, closed out.



The providing of this compiled information to others as required constitutes the second major part of the group's work. Several outside agencies, such as Dental Trust, Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan and the Trade Unions, require regular monthly summaries of changes in employee data which are relevant to their own operations; these summaries are compiled by the Personnel Services group. Individual employees sometimes contact the group to enquire or complain about problems of sick pay, vacation pay, etc. By far the greatest volume of enquiries, however, comes from the Store Managers and their bookkeepers; these enquiries are usually in the form of telephone calls, and account for close to ninety per cent of the personal contacts made by the Personnel Services group. Enquiries from the stores usually concern information in the files which the stores require, or administrative problems related thereto. Each area of benefits, insurance, union, etc. has its own particular features and procedures, and a knowledge of each is necessary for a proper service to be offered.

Prior to 1971, the work was organized in such a way that each employee dealt with a special topic or group of topics; she would keep the records for those matters only, and serviced the entire region with respect to her special area of duties. For instance, all enquiries on hospital insurance would be handled by one clerk, vacation pay by another, and so on. A client, requiring information on a particular matter, would contact the appropriate clerk in Personnel Services who specialized in that matter. When a particular clerk was absent, on vacation or due to illness, a backlog of work would tend to accumulate. Usually, the Manager of the group would have to step in and handle the work herself.

The Company's operations were expanding and the workload of Personnel Services was, consequently, growing. The system was operating at capacity and showing signs of strain. For instance, the staff turnover rate was high, and absences due to illness and other causes were frequent enough to be considered a serious problem. There were strong indications that the pressure and monotony of the work was contributing to low morale and inefficiency. At about this time the parent company, Steinberg's Limited, established Miracle Food Mart as a subsidiary and an even faster rate of growth was projected, both in the number of stores and in the total number of employees.

The Assistant General Manager (now General Manager) and the Manager, Personnel Services (Mrs. Reese) were both actively concerned about the above problems, the already serious proportions of which could not but be aggravated by an increasing workload.

They jointly decided that something had to be done to improve the morale and overall effectiveness of her group. Mrs. Reese conceived the idea of re-arranging the work in such a way that each of her employees would learn to handle all aspects of the group's function. This, she felt would give them the satisfaction of playing a more competent and self-reliant role in the group, and encourage them to feel more involved, personally, in the process of serving the group's clients.

Mrs. Reese had also been struck by the observation that a store manager often had to make as many as five or six separate calls to the Personnel Services office to get information on several different matters. She reasoned that if each clerk in her office could handle all kinds of enquiries, the clients would be saved considerable time and inconvenience. This observation is echoed strongly by the Store Managers, who recall that it frequently took "hours, or even days" to resolve relatively minor problems through Personnel Services, because it was so difficult to pin down just who was responsible for what.

In summary, the changes in work arrangements were conceived, in 1971, with three basic aims in mind:

- i) to make the work more satisfying to the group's members by providing opportunities for personal involvement and personal growth;
- ii) to improve the group's effectiveness by serving its clients more efficiently and more conveniently;
- iii) to prepare the group to cope with an increasing work load, with little or no increase in staff.

The proposals for change were not arrived at under the influence of any Company programme of job-enrichment, or of any external propaganda on that subject. The change was undertaken because the organization faced a period of fast growth, and the Manager of the Personnel Services group felt that a client-oriented group could meet the organization's needs more effectively than a function-oriented group that would simply be expanded in proportion to the ever-increasing work load. She expected the changed group to be more convenient and more responsive to the clients, more satisfying to its members, and more efficient on a service-cost basis.



### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHANGE

In 1971 the Manager, Mrs. Reese, was convinced that prompt action was necessary and that a re-arrangement along the lines outlined above was a feasible solution to her problem. She called a meeting of her group and put the suggestion to them, that each should learn everybody else's job, and that they should share the entire work load, rather than specialize in narrow areas. In this and subsequent meetings and discussions it was eventually agreed that the idea was worth trying. The employees resolved that they should train each other in their various specialties. The re-training was expected to take approximately twelve months; however, no constraints were put on training times; the learner would decide when she had the confidence to handle the job she was learning.

It became clear that some extra help would be needed during the transition period to keep the regular service going. Mrs. Reese therefore proposed to Management that her group embark at once on the re-organization and training programme, and that extra funds be budgeted for temporary clerical help during the first few months. The Assistant General Manager (now General Manager) was well aware of the problem and backed the proposal. A flexible budget was agreed upon to get them "over the hump".

Thus, the change programme got under way. After two months, the temporary help was discontinued. After nine months, well ahead of expectations, the training was complete. During this training period, the girls worked in pairs and scheduled their training to suit their own needs and the variations in the work loads. It was a case of "learning by doing", asking for explanations, and watching how enquiries were answered and problems solved. Learners would listen in on telephone enquiries to see how they were handled. These methods of training are still used in the group to teach new employees. Although only three members (including the Manager) of the original group still remain, the new staff have received their training along the same lines.

In the course of training each other, the clerks produced a set of "job descriptions". These are not "position" descriptions, so much as a set of procedures for carrying out the various tasks of the group. This manual of procedures is kept up-to-date and is frequently referred to by all the staff. It is looked upon as a useful resource, not as a list of mandatory duties. An important advantage of anybody being able to do any job is that, when a member of the group is absent for any reason, or simply not

feeling "up to par", the others can share the load. Thus, backlogs do not build up and service is not interrupted. To help this flexibility, the staff decided they would standardize the arrangement of each desk, so that a substitute taking over an absentee's desk would know exactly where everything is. All the clerks have learned to type, which eliminates the need for a stenographer in the group.

Nearly all the clients require the same kind of service, and file the same kind of data. Therefore, the clients have been divided into groups of twelve and fourteen stores each, and one of these groups has been allocated to each clerk. A clerk typically handles the data and enquiries from her group of stores, gets to know the managers, bookkeepers and many of the employees concerned, and thinks and speaks of them as "her people". Thus, a working and personal relationship grows up between a personnel clerk and her clients more readily than it could under the old arrangements.

During the transition period, the Manager was constantly available to help in case of difficulties. A senior clerk was appointed "Section Head", who could take charge in the Manager's absence. There are now four levels in the department: Manager, Section Head, Clerk and Trainee. New recruits join as Trainees, and work under the tutelage of the Section Head and one or more clerks until they are competent to assume the duties of a clerk and service their own group of stores. At that point the trainee is promoted.

One client group that differs from the others in some respects is the Warehouse and Head Office group. The employees of the Warehouse belong to a different union (Teamsters) from that of the store employees (Canadian Food and Allied Workers), and their work arrangements differ in various ways. This client group has normally been serviced by the Manager's secretary, who is customarily a stenographer. However, since the clerical part of the job has increased substantially, and since all the clerks have now learned to type, they have found it convenient to handle this combined job themselves. Thus, ever since the last stenographer left the position vacant, the personnel clerks have been taking it in turn to act as clerk for the Warehouse and Head Office group and secretary to the Personnel Services Manager. They rotate the job on a six month cycle.



The group holds a meeting once a month to discuss its problems and possibilities for improvement. These meetings have produced a number of improvements in methods, such as the colour-coding of file folders to help avoid "mis-filing" problems. They have also produced at least one major advance: The group "inputs" a large amount of statistical data to the Computer Centre for use on the payroll programme. Data on hours worked, etc., are put in by the stores and other operating departments. The Accounting Department used to assign a "Coordinator" whose task it was to organize these various inputs, to expedite the processing of the pay cheques at the Computer Centre and to resolve with the appropriate department any problem that arose. The Coordinator, not actually belonging to any of the groups involved, found her role ambiguous and frustrating, and there were frequent misunderstandings. The Personnel Services group proposed that they should take over the administrative aspects of the payroll computer programme. Not without some trepidation at the responsibility of dealing with the computer - "some of the girls were -- a little fearful" - they finally decided they would give it a try. The Coordinator was pleased to resume regular accounting duties. The arrangement has worked out well and is commented on further in the next section of this report.

While the work load grew substantially following the change in work arrangements, and while additional duties -- such as the payroll -- were eventually assumed, it was not found necessary to increase the number of staff in the Personnel Records group. In fact, service became more efficient and, by all reports, the morale of the group improved. Turnover and absences of employees decreased substantially. The increase in productivity, together with the added competence and skills of each employee, made it possible to increase pay rates.

#### THE CURRENT SITUATION

At the time this case history is being written, the Personnel Services group has been working with the new arrangements for nearly three years. As we have noted, there has been some turnover in staff, but this has been mainly due to pregnancies -- a sign of good morale in itself. The interviewers were, therefore, able to speak with only the Manager and the Section Head, who had been there before the change, with respect to before-and-after comparisons. One other member had joined the group just as the change was being introduced. Most of the above description of the change, and the discussion of its reasons and its effects is derived from an interview with those three people. In addition, we spoke with newer members about their perceptions of the group as they now find it.

Two Store Managers who have dealt with the group since before the change in arrangements were also asked for their comments. The comments of these people and the impressions gained from talking with them about the current situation form the basis of this section.

All members of the group with whom the interviewers talked were emphatic in declaring that it is an interesting and rewarding place to work. Those who had had jobs elsewhere recalled working with less scope for learning and responsibility and would be unwilling to change back. For instance, a recent recruit recalled her previous job with another company:

"I wouldn't go back there. It was a job - but looking back ... I had to open the mail, match invoices; I had to feed work to six other girls who were doing - I think balancing or something. When somebody fell behind, nobody would do anything to help..."

Some feel that not everybody would like this new arrangement. In fact, all new hirings are made by the Manager, and are hand-picked after careful interviewing and talking with all the staff. Mrs. Reese is looking for "a certain type of person", able to withstand the pressures of work and anxious clients, to handle personal conflict with tact and diplomacy and to contribute to an atmosphere of honesty and trust. The idea of mutual trust and acceptance is evidently important:

"Before I hire anyone, the girls talk to her - she has to have the personality to fit into the team."

(Manager)

"There has to be mutual trust ..."

"... never had anybody who didn't shape up."

(Section Head)

The process that was begun in 1971 was essentially one which would lead to the sharing of roles, tasks and responsibilities. Each member of the group was to have her own portion of the work load, but would be able to assume all or part of anyone else's at any time. Looking at the situation now, three years later, one observes that this sharing is being done, that differences between individual jobs have largely disappeared and that staff members are virtually interchangeable. The specialized position of Manager's secretary, for instance, has, as we noted above, become



a role which is rotated through the group, rather than a distinct and special job. The position of Manager has, certainly, remained distinct, but the Manager needs to spend less and less time actually in the group; her role has tended to expand into other responsible areas of management, such as labour-management negotiations -

"I'm on negotiations quite often ... I'm  
out more now, because of job enrichment!"  
(Manager)

At the same time, each clerk is now accorded a good deal of freedom and responsibility in dealing with her clients. Problems are posted upward to Section Head or Manager only in cases of real difficulty. Each clerk handles her own correspondence within the Company.

The group continues to have monthly meetings to discuss new needs and ideas. They are currently considering the possibility of operating on "flexible hours". This could have the advantage of extending their hours of service "coverage", while giving the employees the freedom to schedule their own days more conveniently. They are taking a number of factors into consideration, including the possible effect such a move would have on the employees in other departments.

As mentioned in the previous section, the Personnel Services group has now taken over the job of checking the computer output listings, which accompany the payroll, and following up on any discrepancies. The Computer Centre is remote from the Region and, if the forwarding of pay cheques by air is delayed by the weather, the Personnel Services group is capable of producing and distributing actual cheques on the spot. This computer-oriented work requires no technical knowledge of hardware or programming, but does require an understanding of the output formats and certain interfacing skills, such as knowing how the computer will interpret items of data input.

From the client's point of view, the change has been most beneficial. Store Managers, who used to experience a lot of difficulty and frustration with personnel services before the change in work arrangements, are very complimentary about the present level of service. Each store now has one person in Personnel Services to contact, and can depend on her to take care of all their needs for information and advice. Store Managers report that a responsible personal relationship soon develops between the Personnel clerk and the Store officer, and problems get

solved quickly and reliably, rather than passed from desk as they too often were under the old arrangements. This has resulted in a substantial saving of time, more reliable information and a better atmosphere of trust and friendliness.

In general, it seems that the work which the Personnel Services group does is well suited to the kind of organization adopted. Individual members of the group are receptive and responsive to the responsibilities and demands of this way of working. There is every indication that the change has "taken"; there is no sign of its reverting back to more narrowly defined positions and separation of responsibilities.

#### EVALUATION IN TERMS OF JOB ENRICHMENT

As we have already noted, the change programme was not undertaken under the rubric of "job enrichment", but rather as a common-sense approach to a practical problem. However, it does exhibit many of the characteristics of job enrichment, and Mrs. Reese has been pleased to recognize these in job enrichment literature which has come to her attention after the fact. Therefore, it does seem appropriate to evaluate the change programme in job enrichment terms.

Job enrichment theory and practice holds that jobs have certain characteristics which are of particular importance to the satisfaction of those who do them. Behavioral research has identified four general characteristics (e.g., Hackman & Lawler, 1971) which have been shown to affect the job satisfaction and the morale of employees. These include: Variety, Autonomy, Task Identity, and Feedback. By reviewing the changes in job content of the individual members of the Personnel Services group that were brought about by the change programme described in this case study, with reference to these four "dimensions", we can evaluate in a general way the amount of enrichment that is involved.

1. Variety refers to the number of different things an employee gets to do in the course of his or her normal duties. The work of the Personnel Services group is related to twenty or thirty different kinds of personnel matters; e.g., benefit administration, vacation pay, salary increases, hirings, terminations. Under the old system, each clerk specialized in just four or five of these "areas", and provided service to all stores, warehouses and offices in the Region with respect to these particular areas. The number of different things she



had to know about, to file, to retrieve, etc., was small; the number of clients was large.

Under the new system, each clerk has learned to handle all, or nearly all, these different areas. That is, the number of things she has to know about, to file and to retrieve, is much larger. However, she now has only a limited number of clients to serve - typically, fourteen stores.

Since each of the twenty or thirty areas has its own particular features and know-how, there is clearly more task variety under the new system. Group members are very much aware of this variety, both in comparison to the "old way" - which only two of them actually experienced - and in comparison to other clerical jobs they have held.

2. Autonomy refers to the freedom of the employee to decide what she has to do and when. Under the old system, each clerk had to record all data pertaining to her "area" as it came in and to give out information on that data when required. All enquiries outside her "area", she would refer to another clerk or to the supervisor. Correspondence was normally dealt with by the Manager and her secretary. (The secretary devoted part of her time to this and part to servicing the Warehouse and Head Office sector of the group's clients).

Under the new system, all clerks write and sign their own letters for in-Company correspondence. Only external correspondence is edited and signed by the Manager. Apart from this, it is hard to clearly identify objective differences in the degree of autonomy or freedom to decide. However, there is a strong feeling that all members of the group act more on their own initiative, and this seems to stem from the fact that each person's scope of competence is much wider and they feel more confident in answering questions.

"If I know about the question (the clients) asked, I'll give them an answer."

(Clerk)

"Before, (the clerks) used to be running to me all the time for answers, but not any more."

(Manager)

Thus, while there is not much in the way of formal delegation of decision-making, there are strong indications that the girls use their own discretion and initiative more in dealing with the clients they serve, and in arranging the work and coping with problems among themselves in the office. In this informal respect, there is evidence of an increase in autonomy.

3. Task identity, in the sense intended here, refers to the employee seeing herself as involved in a coherent process which has an intelligible and useful outcome, and in which she can take some personal pride of accomplishment. The main difference between the old and new arrangements is that each clerk, instead of dealing with a narrow section of the group's range of services, now handles the full range. This wider knowledge makes it possible to see problems in better perspective. Personnel problems which involve the Personnel Services group often involve more than one of its subject areas. For instance, a change in marital status may involve changes in tax, insurance, etc. Under the new system, a clerk will follow the problem through, herself, and make a major contribution to its solution. Under the old system, the problem would have passed from desk to desk, and no one clerk would have seen it through.

"We can follow the problem, from square one, right until it's resolved. We see the whole picture".

Along with the wider range of services goes a smaller group of people for each clerk to deal with. In this way, she gets to know her clients better and becomes their primary personal contact in Personnel Services. This encourages personal involvement, and contributes to a sense of wholeness and "meaningfulness" in the task.

4. Feedback, refers to the sending back to the employee of information concerning the outcome of her work. Under the old arrangement, a client Store Manager or bookkeeper, having to deal with several different clerks for his various needs, would tend to direct criticisms and complaints to the Manager of the group.

In a group like this, which services store personnel in a variety of ways, many of them touching on personal problems, there is bound to be a good deal of feedback under any method of operating. However, the client-clerk relationship is, as we have seen, closer under the new arrangement, and feedback - critical and otherwise - is consequently more direct. Clerks sometimes attend meetings between the Personnel Manager, Store



Managers and bookkeepers, and are sometimes consulted by the latter on matters of procedure. It is considered an important part of the clerk's job, to be able to handle with diplomacy an irate caller, to admit fault gracefully when a mistake has been made and to handle conflict and client anxiety with tact and firmness. For example,

"Well. -. they come in and they just stand there raving! 'What happened? I didn't get this paid,' or 'did my vacation pay come in?!' Well, no - but I didn't get a 'vacation card'. So you've got to follow-up. We have absence card records; I pull the card and see whether the order came in. I didn't get the card - so, 'go back to your supervisor'. Then the supervisor comes in with the card - and I have to make up a pay advance. This morning I have three to make up."

The above quotation offers evidence of autonomy ("you've got to follow up"), task identity (seeing the whole problem) and also of feedback, in the sense of the clerk seeing the outcome of her efforts. In short, there is copious and continual feedback in this kind of work; the new arrangements ensure that the feedback is more direct and meaningful, because the clerk has a closer relationship with her clients and a concern for more aspects of their problems.

In addition to clarifying job dimensions, the literature on job enrichment points out a number of "pitfalls" which can spoil the effectiveness of well-intentioned programmes, (see e.g., Tregoe, 1974). The lack of proper training, failure to explain the programme in advance, and loss of status by supervisors through the decrease in supervisory duties, have been known to turn employees against the idea of job enrichment. The case we have described has been singularly safe from these dangers. As we have seen, the programme was undertaken in full consultation with the employees involved. The employees thoroughly trained one another, under the guidance of their Manager. The Manager has gained rather than lost status by taking the opportunity to play a less direct part in the office work and to contribute more in other areas of personnel management (e.g. labour negotiations). It is reasonable to suppose that the change in work arrangements owes much of its undisputed success to its having been instituted by the employees involved, with the leadership of the Manager involved.

In summary, the introduction of the new arrangement has resulted in substantial job-enrichment on all four of the dimensions noted above; and this has been achieved for all members of the group, including the supervisor.

#### SUMMARY

This case study has described a change in the work arrangements of the Personnel Services group of Miracle Food Mart, Ontario, (a subsidiary of Steinberg's Limited). The group serves a large clientele of stores and other departments in the super-market chain. The group is small (7-8 people). Its members are all female. They are not members of a union.

The change was made with two main objectives in mind. The first was to maintain the effectiveness of the group in a period of rapid expansion of the clientele. The second was to improve the morale of its members; the monotony and mounting pressure of the work were seen as causing a high rate of absenteeism and turnover.

The change was not imposed or undertaken as a conscious exercise of "job enrichment". In fact, much of the initiative came from within the group; the idea was conceived as a "common-sense" approach to an urgent set of problems. The key decisions for specific action came from group discussions in which all members of the group took an active part.

The essential change in each job is from a narrow range of services for a large number of clients, to a complete range of services for a smaller group of clients. Under the old arrangement, each clerk provided a filing and information service in a relatively narrow and specialized area (e.g., health benefits) to all clients in the region. Under the changed arrangement, each clerk serves her own group of clients in the whole range of matters for which the Personnel Services group is responsible. Having more frequent contact with fewer clients, each clerk is able to develop a closer client relationship. The nature of the work, and the range of services involved, is within the normal compass of a clerk's capabilities; i.e., a clerk can reasonably learn all the duties in a reasonable length of time. If this were not so, some degree of specialization would, of course, be necessary.

The change has resulted in considerable job enrichment, in terms of the usual dimensions of variety, autonomy, task identity and feedback. It has also resulted in greatly improved morale, in



much higher productivity of the group, and in a better quality of service.

It could be argued that a change of this sort is all very well for a small group of the "right" people, doing the "right" kind of work, but that it would not be widely applicable. However, there appears not to be anything unique about the ingredients of the situation; the group is small because it chooses to be so (it is not part of the personnel department which deals with recruitment, selection, training, etc.); the clerical tasks of filing and retrieving information are similar to those of many clerical departments; the clerks themselves, while carefully selected for certain qualities, are not unique or highly unusual. There is, therefore, room for the possibility that this kind of change, with its benefits of efficiency and satisfaction, could be brought about in any number of clerical office situations. The essential ingredient is, of course, the desire to try perseveringly to make it work.

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